

Minutes for 1/20

Meeting Start 1730 ;; Quorum 55  
Minutes Adopted: 41 yes, 2 abstain

**Election Czar Chew:** Candidate applications close at midnight on Sunday 1/23. Please submit an interest form through Qualtrics on our website to apply. You can see all position descriptions, time commitments, and more information on the GPSS elections site:

<https://gpss.vt.edu/the-senate/elections.html>

**BoV Rep Miskovic COMMENT:** There's an info session for the BoV rep position scheduled for **7:15 on February 2nd** for anyone interested. Also, feel free to nominate any students you think would be a good fit using the nomination form on the website. The nominee will receive an email telling them they've been nominated and encouraging them to apply.

<https://bov.vt.edu/studentreps.html>

**President Leff:** Graduate Research Symposium getting kicked off and will be held on **March 23** – looking for chairs [positions now filled!]. The Symposium will be hybrid or virtual only, so please remember to submit an abstract. More information will be coming out soon.

[**VP Fox:** We are also looking for an Interim Director of Programs to help us ride out the rest of the semester. Please let me know if you're interested!]

We were also asked to submit names for folks interested in participating in Sub-Committees for the Sexual Violence Culture and Climate Task Force. Folks from the United Feminist Movement and from GPSS worked hard to get us a seat at the table, so it would be great to have anyone interested in advocacy here apply

(<https://www.president.vt.edu/strategicinterests/TaskForces/SexualViolenceCultureandClimateWorkGroup.html>)

The Cost of Living Wage Resolution will be hitting University Council for debate on **February 7th and February 21st** so mark your calendars to come support that Resolution as it makes its way through UC readings. Get in contact with folks on UC to gain support and express interest in this important Resolution ([https://governance.vt.edu/assets/uc\\_roster.pdf](https://governance.vt.edu/assets/uc_roster.pdf)).

[**VP Fox:** You do need to register to attend UC meetings! Please do so here: <https://governance.vt.edu/> using the small script instructions]

The Dean of the Graduate School has been immensely helpful in moving some crucial Resolutions along. Right now the parental leave Resolution is getting integrated into the internal policies of the grad school, and we're optimistic this is going to go well and align with our priorities. This and the contract clarifications are being farmed out to DRSCAP; I'll let you know when they're finalized.

Keep an eye on what is going on now that we have a new governor and the executive orders coming out of there. Some of these are setting sights on anti-BDS Resolutions, even at a University level. We're making an impact, but I'll keep you updated on that as time goes on.

Our Resolution focusing on defunding campus police was killed in a private security policy committee. This committee does not have graduate school representation nor a list of members. We were not alerted as to when the meeting was so that we could advocate for the Resolution or answer questions. I essentially received an email after the meeting took place notifying me that the committee decided that this Resolution was outside of graduate student purview, and we were not allowed to be talking about it. While we do not intend to let this go unanswered, we need to focus all of our energy on the Living Wage Resolution coming up for debate.

**Sen. QUESTION:** What other mechanisms for applying pressure do we have?

**President Leff RESPONSE:** Pushing forward on the defund resolution might jeopardize the living wage campaign. I don't want to put it down, but I don't want that interference. I think we'll have a more unified message if we wait and talk to more community members to have a unified effort across different bodies.

### **New Business**

#### **E&SC Resolution 2021-22 A**

>> **Comment WAIVED** > 38 yes, 4 abstain

#### **Policy 13010**

**Sen. COMMENT:** Clarify the graduate employment by a VT employee's immediate family member in section 2.a.

>> **Comment APPROVED** > 38 yes, 7 abstain

### **COVID Communications**

**President Leff:** Many, many breakdowns in covid communications. It is extremely dangerous for graduate students between misinformation and not being aware of options that are available. We worked as quickly as we could with the Disability Alliance and Caucus and Deans to get information to folks. There are still notable oversights in accounting for various departments, GRAs vs. GTAs, Instructors of Record, and so forth. There are still major PPE shortages and testing shortages and failing communications about where / how / if folks can get access to these resources. Please pay attention to our social media pages as well as the Dean's social media page, the provost's website, and the VT Ready page for the most up to date information. We are trying to get a frequently updated, centralized COVID communication Hub up, but that is slow, and I'll let you know how it goes. Graduate students are still classified as students and required to report booster status to the university  
[[https://students.vt.edu/vaccination\\_reporting.html](https://students.vt.edu/vaccination_reporting.html)]

**Sen. COMMENT:** I'd love to see more transparency around testing/cases. We need to know results from waste water and other surveillance testing, especially since so many students/staff/faculty test off-campus, which I don't believe is reported on the dashboard (someone correct me if I'm wrong!). It obfuscates the rate of spread among our academic community, which makes it much harder to gauge risk. I don't know if that's something we can push for, but it's a concern that I have and that I've heard from other grad students and staff.

**Sen. QUESTION:** What masks are prohibited for teaching in class? Can we still wear cloth masks?

**Sen. QUESTION:** Has there been any efforts to overturn the university mask mandate from the governor's office?

**BoV Rep. Miskovic COMMENT:** University policy is to follow CDC guidance on masks. CDC guidance on masks is KN95, not N95 (N95 should be saved for medical professionals). The Governor's EO overturning mask mandates only applies to K-12 institutions. The legal challenges revolve around SB1303, which is also only applicable to K-12. The University still sets mask policy and (as far as I know) no efforts have been made to overturn University policy.

**Sen. QUESTION:** Where do we report positive cases at?

**President Leff RESPONSE:** Dean of students. (Email: [dean.students@vt.edu](mailto:dean.students@vt.edu) ; Phone: 540-231-3787 ; website: <https://veoci.com/v/p/form/zssh69p8tw7j> )

**Sen. COMMENT:** Having better timelines for notifying us of modality options would be nice. Something better than 1 PM on the Sunday before we have to teach.

**President Leff RESPONSE:** Yeah, we've been trying. But it just has not been addressed. It's pretty grim.

**>> MOTION to Adjourn:** 40 yes > Meeting adjourned 1840 hrs.